

STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA



8880

Q23

Book 2

STORIES OF **63 SAINTS** OF SOUTH INDIA

The Stories in this Book

KANNAPPA NAYANAR

KALAYA NAYANAR

MANAKKANCHARA NAYANAR

ARUVAL TAYA NAYANAR

AANAYA NAYANAR

MURTHI NAYANAR

MURUGA NAYANAR

RUDRA PASUPATI NAYANAR



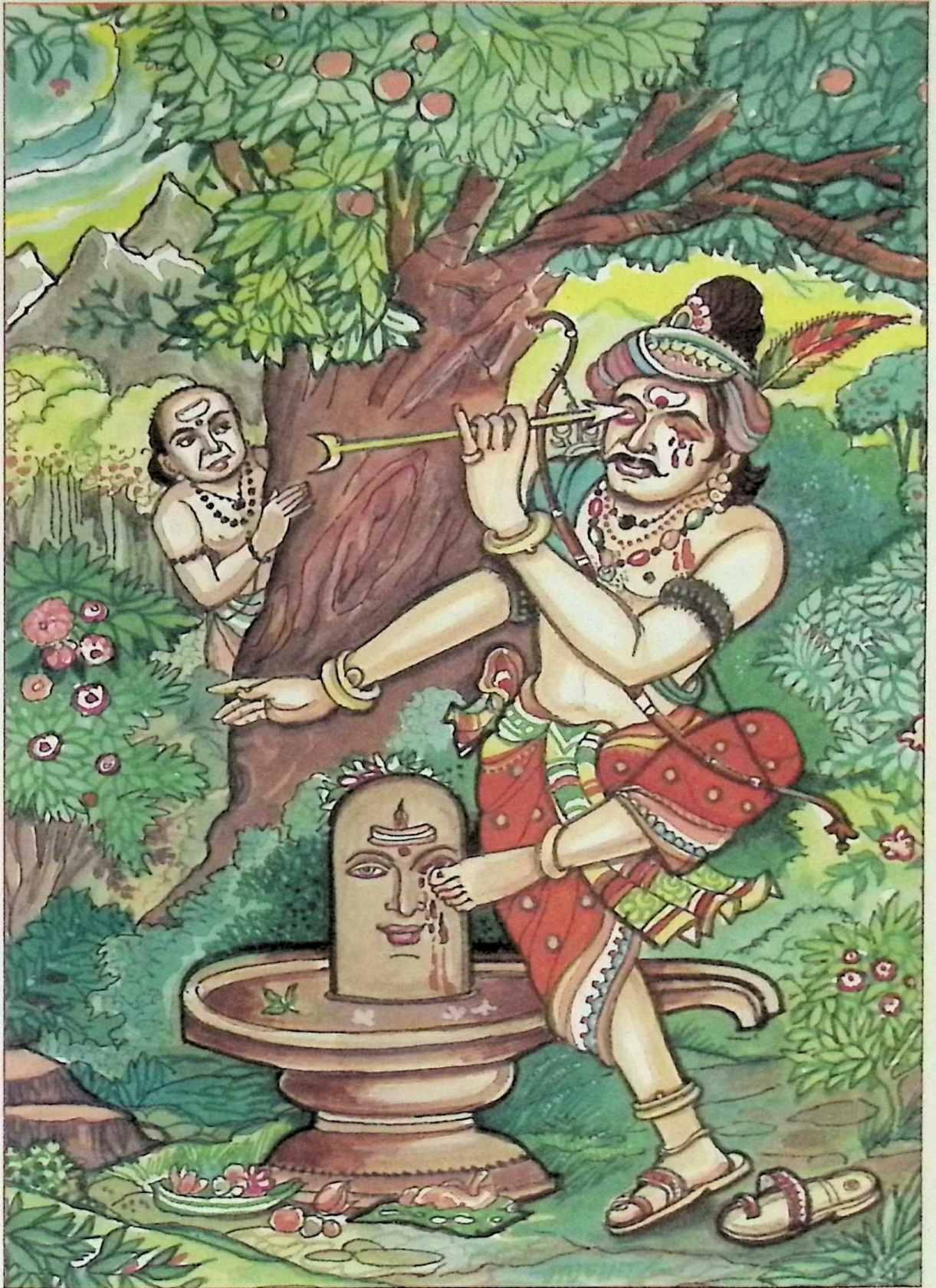
Book 2

KANNAPPA NAYANAR

The fertile Uduppur lay in hilly and beautiful Kalahasti. The hills rang with melodious Kuravai dance tunes of women praying to Lord Muruga, Lord of the Hills. Nagan, a brave hunter, ruled over the area. He and his wife, Taththai, prayed to Muruga for a child, offering sacrifices in His temple. Pleased, Muruga blessed them with a sturdy child. He was named Thinnan, the strong-willed.

The boy, with his dark body, radiant face and tender heart, was loved by the entire tribe, who brought him flowers, leaves, feathers, ivory ornaments, tiger claws and boar tusks. Over time, Thinnan became a skilful archer and learnt to wield his spear well. The day he shot his first arrow was celebrated with a grand feast at which honey, toddy and dishes of fruit, millet and bamboo rice were served.

When Thinnan grew into a brave lad of sixteen, Nagan crowned him his successor. The hunters paid him homage and followed him into the forests to hunt. One day, a wild boar escaped from them. Thinnan and his friends Nanan and Kadan chased and killed it at the foot of a hill and bore it up Kalahasti Hill. As he walked through the green forests where Kudimi Thevar, the tufted God, was present, Thinnan felt a divine peace. The gentle breeze and the gurgling waters of the River Mugali close by soothed and unconsciously drew him to Kudimi Thevar. Thinnan had a vision of the Lord and was filled with passionate love for Siva. Exclaiming out that the Lord must be lonely in the forest, Thinnan wanted to offer Him a feast of pork. He ordered Kadan to start a fire to bake the boar's flesh and rushed up the hill with new-found strength.



Thinnan roasted the pork, tasted each piece, and soaked the best ones in honey in a leaf cup. He filled his mouth with river water, gathered flowers and, placing them in his hair, hurried to the Kalahasti Temple. With his sandals, he swept off the flowers that had been offered to God by the priest. Pouring the water from his mouth as Abhishekam to the Lingam, he adorned it with the flowers he had brought. Then he offered the meat to the Lord, begging Him to accept it. Thinnan stood guard over the temple all night long. Day dawned. Thinnan, completely absorbed in the Lord, asked Him if He had slept well and went into the forest to look for food to offer Him.

When Sivakosari, the priest, came to offer morning worship, he was horrified. His flowers had been swept away, and flesh and bones were scattered all around! Quickly uttering cleansing prayers, he bathed the idol and the temple with water. Then he closed the temple and went away.

When Thinnan returned, he once more placed his unorthodox offerings before the idol. At dawn, he went away to hunt. When Sivakosari came, he was so upset that he decided to fast until God told him the truth. So it went on: the priest's ceremonial worship and hunter's own ardent Pooja. Thinnan's devotion made him forget everything. But Siva was happy with his devotion and revealed the truth in a dream to Sivakosari. The hunter's unsophisticated love pleased Him greatly for, though his deeds were unorthodox, they were fragrant with true devotion. Siva asked Sivakosari to observe Thinnan's devotion the next day to teach him that simple sincerity was better than learned ceremony. The next day, the priest hid behind a bush and watched Thinnan. Thinnan sensed that something was wrong but proceeded to worship the Lord with water, flowers

and meat. Suddenly, he saw the Lord's right eye bleeding and was very upset. He ran to get some herbs and pressed them into the eye. The bleeding did not stop. Thinnan wept. He plucked out his own eye and fixed it on Siva. To his delight, the bleeding stopped. Then Siva's left eye began bleeding! As Thinnan was about to pluck out his other eye, a mysterious force stayed his hand. A voice asked him to stop hurting himself. The Lord appeared before him and touched his right eye. Lo and behold! Thinnan's sight was restored. From then on, he was known as Kannappan, since he gave his own eye to restore vision to Siva. He found his lasting abode on the right side of Siva. The priest, who had seen everything, worshipped Kannappan, realising that sincere devotion to Siva is the only path to salvation.



KALAYA NAYANAR



Tirukkadavur was a land of milk and honey. Sweet-smelling meadows and gentle breezes made the air fragrant and pleasant. It was here that Siva had kicked Yama, the God of Death. This event, together with the breathtaking beauty of the place, attracted pilgrims seeking Moksha (salvation).

Kalaya Nayanar, a learned and pious man, lived in this town. He was known as Kungiliya Kalaya Nayanar, because he liked lighting the Kungiliyam or Indian dammar, a resin used as incense in the temple.

Even in hard times, Kalaya Nayanar continued the Kungiliyam service to God. Reduced to starvation, the family had had no food in two days. The only thing left was the Thali, a Hindu woman's precious symbol of wifeness, dearer to her than life. His good dutiful wife removed her Thali and wore a yellow string in its place. She asked her husband to sell it and buy food for their family.

Kalaya Nayanar bade his wife a tearful goodbye, and left to do as she wished. On the way, he saw a merchant carrying a bag of Kungiliyam and stopped him. The Nayanar declared that he would rather die of starvation than give up his daily service to the Lord. So he exchanged the Thali for the Kungiliyam and went to the temple. The Nayanar forgot his family's as well as his own hunger in his deep devotion to the Lord. Singing hymns in praise of Siva, he put the Kungiliyam in the incense pot.



The Lord directed His grace towards the starving home. The family had prayed to Him, and had tried to forget their hunger by sleeping. A voice was heard, proclaiming that their home would prosper. When the lady woke up, she saw her home full of all she needed. She prepared a grand meal and waited for her husband.

Kalaya Nayanar, who was in a divine trance, was woken up by a voice that bade him return home. He could not believe his eyes when he saw the splendid house and the delicious feast spread before him. The Nayanar declared that Lord Siva's grace had led them from fast to feast. His devotion to Lord Siva increased tenfold and he spent all he had in the service of the devotees of Siva.

It was Siva's will that the greatness of the Nayanar should be proclaimed to all. There was a temple of Siva at Tiruppanandal. The Siva Lingam in its sanctum inclined to one side. The Chola king, who came to worship the Lingam, tried his best to straighten it. A rope was tied around the Lingam in an attempt to pull it but in vain. No human power could straighten it. Kalaya Nayanar heard of the king's plight and rushed to his aid. He showered flowers on the Lord and lighted his Kungiliyam, praying that Siva should stand straight before them. His deep devotion made the Lingam assume its original straight pose. The king paid obeisance to the Nayanar for showing everyone the power of faith in the Lord.

The temple was renewed and Kalaya Nayanar spent a few days there inspiring devotion in the hearts of everyone before going home. Appar and Sambandar, the great saints of Saivism, graced his home with their presence. Kalaya Nayanar lived long, worshipping Lord Siva and finally attained salvation at His feet.

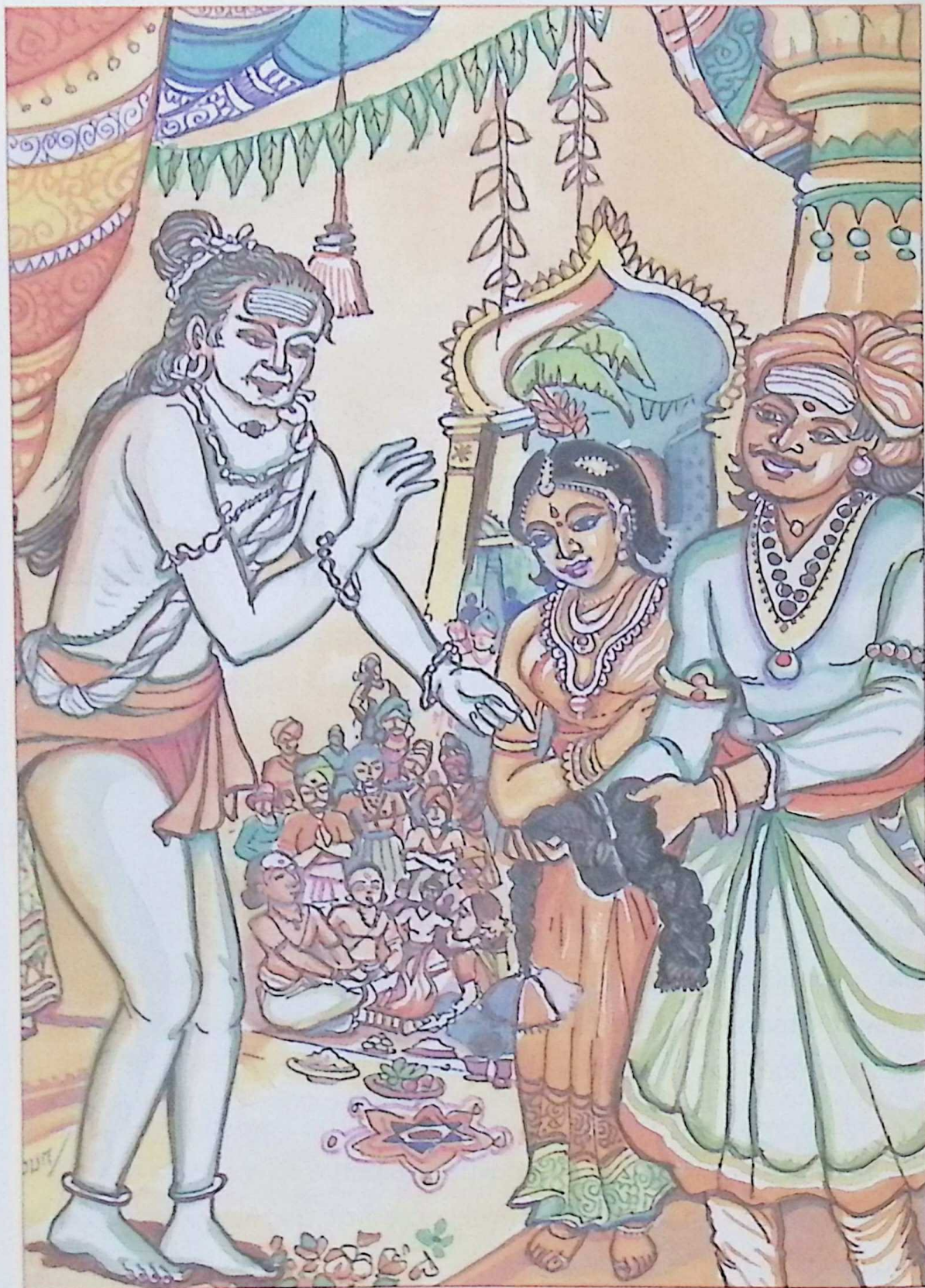
MANAKKANCHARA NAYANAR

Kancharur was a village flowing with sugar-cane juice and honey. The village got its name from "charu," which in Tamil means "juice".

Manakkancharar was a pious benefactor of the village, who was dedicated to the service of the Lord and His devotees.

The Nayanar had not been blessed with children. So he prayed fervently for one. God granted him an angelic daughter, beautiful and graceful. The daughter grew up into a charming girl, with winsome manners. The Nayanar arranged his daughter's marriage with a princely devotee called Eyarkone Kalikkamar.

The wedding was to take place on the next day, when the Nayanar's devotion to the Lord was subjected to a severe trial. The bridegroom and his party were expected at the Nayanar's home, which wore a festive look.



Just then, God appeared before the Nayanar in the guise of a sage whose body was smeared with sacred ashes. He wore a Rudrakshamala or rosary.

The Nayanar welcomed him, declaring that he was honoured to do service to a great devotee of the Lord on the happy occasion of his daughter's wedding. The Nayanar brought his daughter and bade her pay obeisance to the sage.

The sage noticed the girl's glossy black tresses. He turned to the Nayanar and asked him for her hair, which he needed for the sacred ropes of hair that he wore. The sage wanted every last strand that adorned the young girl's head.

Would any girl part with her tresses on the day of her wedding? But, being a dutiful daughter, the Nayanar's only child submitted to her father's unflinching devotion to the Lord, and allowed her tresses to be shorn and offered to the sage.

A light dazzled everyone and there stood Siva with Uma (Parvati). An oracle was heard proclaiming that the Nayanar had stood the divine test. The Lord blessed the Nayanar and his family. Beautiful tresses grew back on the girl's shaven head, and the happy bridegroom married the Nayanar's daughter.

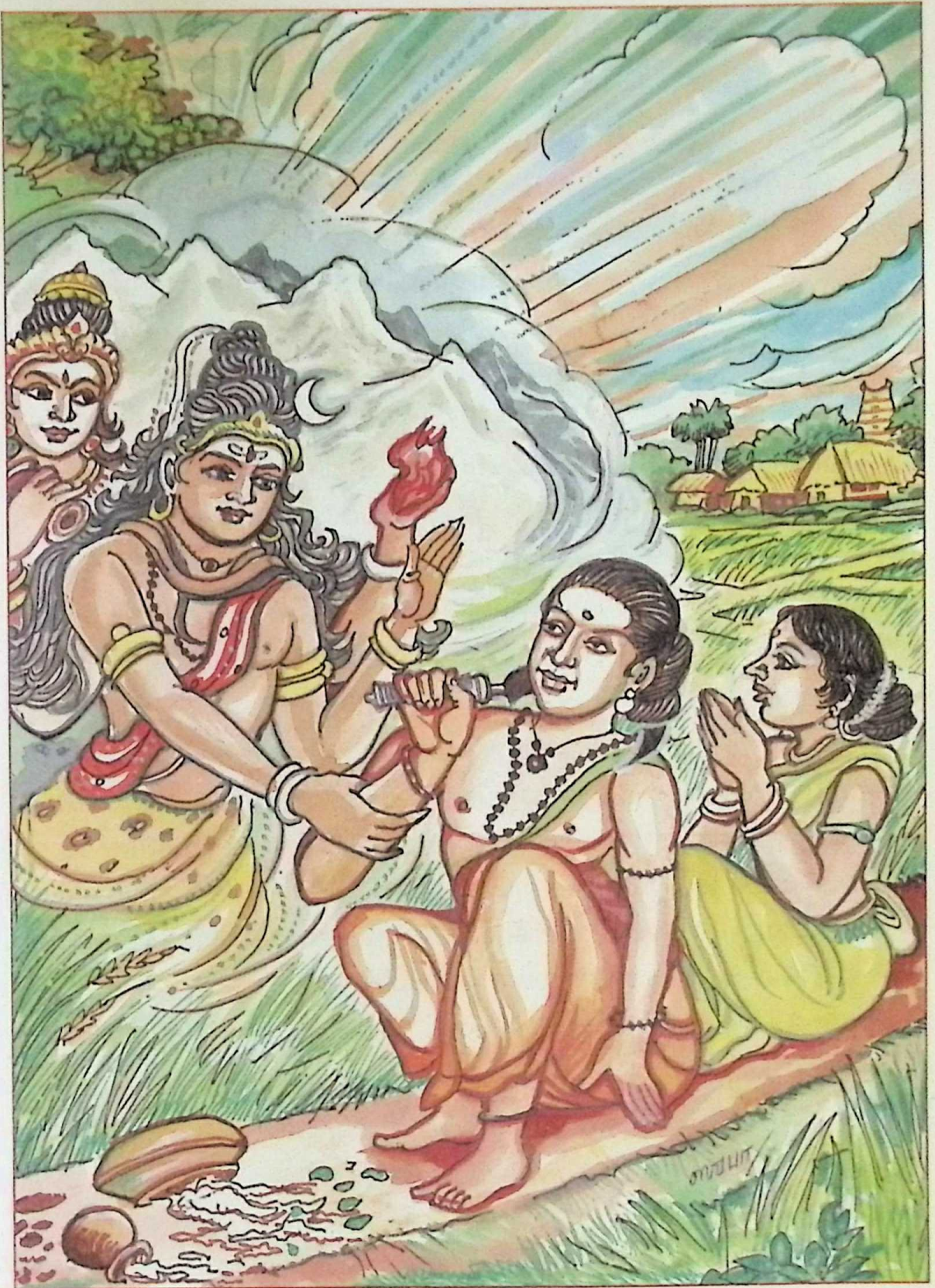
The devoted Nayanar's sacrifice was a testimony to the fact that the Lord always comes to the rescue of His sincere devotees. The only way to attain everlasting bliss is through complete and unconditional surrender to His Will.

ARUVAL TAYA NAYANAR

Kanamangalam was a land of plenty on the shores of the river Cauvery. Tayanar was a devout citizen, who made his offering of rice, cabbage and tender mango to the Lord. Even in times of hardship, he worked during harvests and got paddy as wages. He set apart the superior variety for God and used the inferior one for his family. Once, when the field yielded only superior paddy, the Nayanar offered all of it to God. All his starving family had was a mash of green leaves. They ate leaves, and offered paddy, cabbage and tender mango to the Lord as usual.

A time came when even the greens got scarce and the family had to live merely on water. Although the Nayanar grew weak and thin because of starvation, he did not give up his religious duties. One day, as he was carrying his offerings to the temple, he fainted and fell on the road. The offerings were scattered in the dust. Upset that he had to live even one day not spent in worship, he decided to put an end to his life and pressed a sword to his throat. The Lord restrained the hand that held the sword. The wound on the Nayanar's throat miraculously healed. The Lord accepted the mangoes scattered on the dust. The revived Nayanar sang in praise of Siva, declaring himself His eternal slave.

The Lord blessed him, saying he had won for himself a place in heaven and thus the Nayanar attained salvation. The Nayanar was known as Aruval Taya Nayanar henceforth, since he had dared to kill himself with a sword (aruval). The Nayanar's absolute surrender to the Lord inspires us to dedication and worship.



AANAYA NAYANAR

Aanaya was a handsome young shepherd who lived in the fertile village of Mangalam. He was a fervent devotee of Lord Siva. Aanaya led his herds to rich pastures and clear pools and his love and concern for the animals were rewarded amply as the animals grew healthy and strong. On his flute, which he had made according to the laws of music, he would play the sacred five letters, Na-ma-si-va-ya. Everyone around him was thrilled by the vibrant and lilting music.

One cloudy winter day, Aanaya led his cows to a rich green meadow followed by other shepherds. Suddenly, he saw a vision of Siva in a Kondrai (laburnum) tree adorned with breathtakingly beautiful flowers. He hummed the holy "Aum" on his flute and was soon lost in spiritual fervour. The atmosphere rang with the peals of the divine symphony.

Soon, a large gathering of people, animals and birds stood around him, entranced by his music. Cows forgot to chew the cud, calves preferred to drink in music, not milk. Every creature stood rapt and intoxicated by the melody of Sivanama. The atmosphere was charged with divine love, and even tigers and deer stood side by side in peace. The very streams seemed to stand still in rapture. Peace and harmony filled every soul.

The divine music rose higher and higher until it reached Heaven, where Siva and Parvati could hear it. Pleased with the divine melody, Siva appeared before the Nayanar and blessed him. The Nayanar bowed and paid obeisance to the Lord and kept up his divine melody till he attained salvation at the feet of the Lord.



MURTHI NAYANAR



The ancient Pandya land was endowed with resplendent beauty, with its golden fields, the silver Vaigai River and impressive mansions. It was a land of plenty. The Goddess of Prosperity had blessed the Pandya country with bountiful riches. The Sangam bards who dwelt there had raised the Tamil language to sublime heights and were renowned worldwide. Lord Siva Himself was pleased with the lilting music of the Tamil Muse.

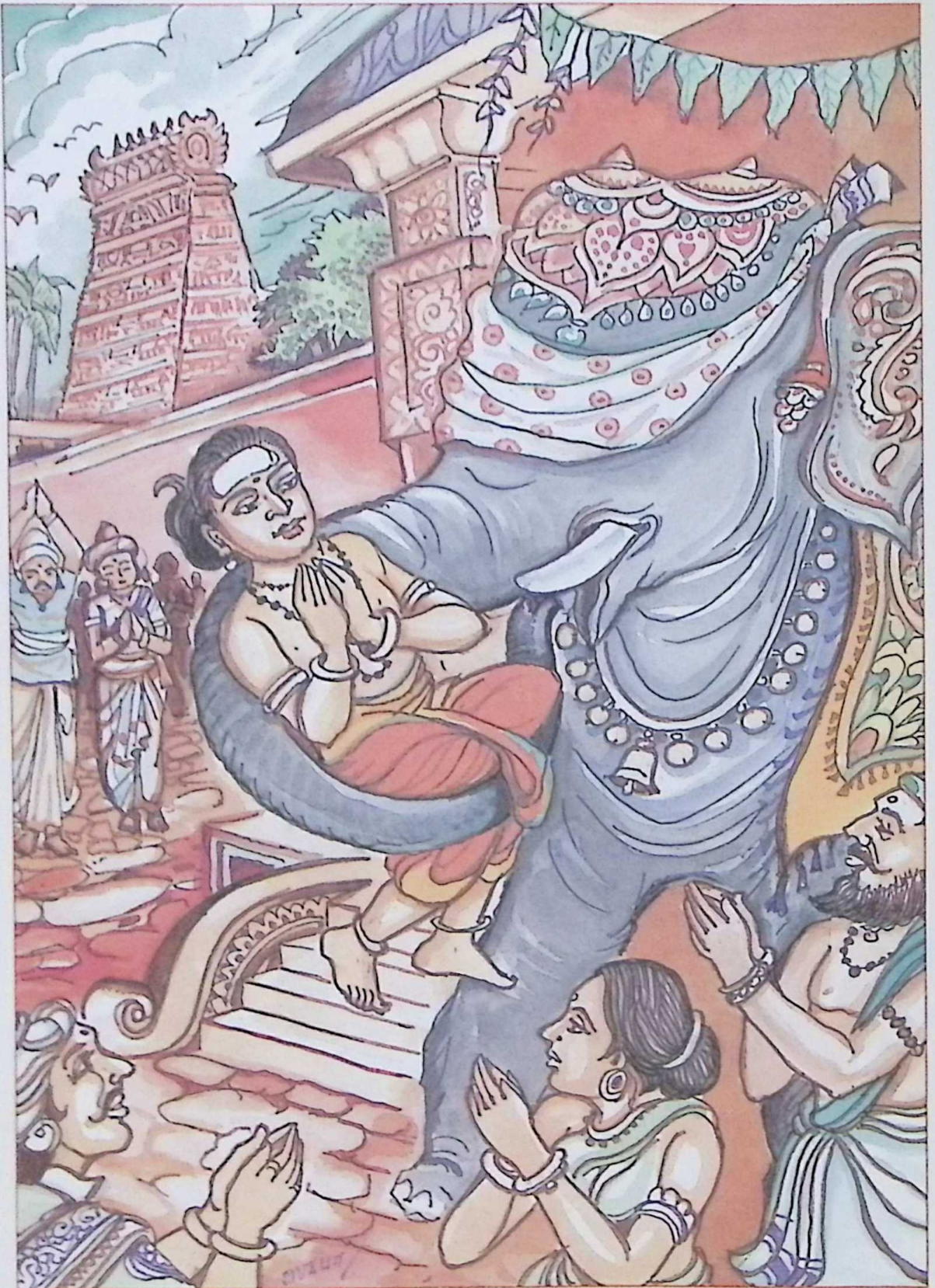
The pretty Pandya damsels adorned themselves with lustrous pearls, the rich tribute of the billowing sea. Sacred hymns dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi and the flame-hued Lord Sundareswarar were sung in this empire of Siva.

Murthi Nayanar, a rich and pious merchant, and the embodiment of Divine Love, lived in this land of plenty. Every day, he delighted in preparing sandal paste with his own hands and offering it to Lord Siva. The fragrance of his sandal paste was quite famous.

All of a sudden, an alien king invaded Madurai. He defeated the Pandyan king and usurped his throne. The new ruler was a lover of Jainism who delighted in persecuting the devotees of Siva. His hatred was patiently borne by the Nayanar, who withstood all the trials and tribulations and continued his daily service to the Lord. Murthi Nayanar could not be provoked by the hostile foreigner.

The king, who was keen to lay obstacles before the Nayanar, commanded that sandalwood was not to be supplied to him henceforth. Not to be deterred by the king's cruelty, the Nayanar proceeded to grind the sandal paste with his elbow. Blood gushed from the gaping wound, but the Nayanar's dedication to the Lord made him continue with the painful grinding.





The Lord took pity on the Nayanar, impressed by his religious fervour, and made him stop grinding with his elbow. He declared that the Nayanar would rule in place of the alien king and would be free to worship the Lord forever.

The Nayanar's elbow miraculously healed and he prayed fervently to the Lord. The rising sun brought the happy news of the sudden death of the alien king. The state elephant was led out to garland the next ruler, as was the custom of the day.

The elephant, blindfolded, entered the temple and placed the garland around the Nayanar's neck. The masses cheered. The blindfold was removed and the elephant lifted the Nayanar and placed him on its back and hurried to the palace. The people hailed the Nayanar as king and prayed that he should live long.

The ministers prepared for the coronation. But the Nayanar declared that he would rule only if the country embraced Saivism. People gladly became devotees of the Lord and the Nayanar, refusing grand ornaments and robes, donned Rudraksha beads and smeared his body with sacred ash.

Murthi Nayanar ruled wisely and for long, inspiring devotion in the hearts of his subjects, till he attained salvation at the feet of the Lord.

MURUGA NAYANAR



Pumpugalur was a beautiful and serene village in Cholanadu. It was blessed with rich green pastures and golden fields. The fragrant gardens in the village were full of

blooms of every hue. The landscape was dotted with silvery lakes full of lilies and lotuses. All this made the village luxuriant.

Hymns in praise of the Lord were sung in the temple by the devotees, whose love for the Supreme gushed like water in the village streams.

Muruga Nayanar was a pious and ardent devotee of the Lord living in the village. A wise and learned man, he rose at dawn each day and, after bathing, would proceed to the gardens and the lily and lotus ponds to collect fresh flowers for worship. The Nayanar would place the fresh and fragrant blooms in his basket, and walk to the temple.

At the temple, Muruga Nayanar would sit alone, stringing the blooms into wonderful garlands of various hues to be offered to God Vardhamaneswarar (Siva), the presiding deity.

The Nayanar spent his time meditating on Siva. He took great delight in serving the Lord's devotees. Tirugnana Sambandar, the leading Saiva saint, was impressed with the Nayanar's devotional





fervour. He visited Muruga Nayanar often, and partook of the refreshments offered to him.

The sages Appar and Sambandar were also very fond of the Nayanar and offered him their blessings.

The Nayanar was a devout follower of Sambandar. Every day, he would chant the Thevaram hymns. His affection for Sambandar was so great that he could not bear to be separated from the saint.

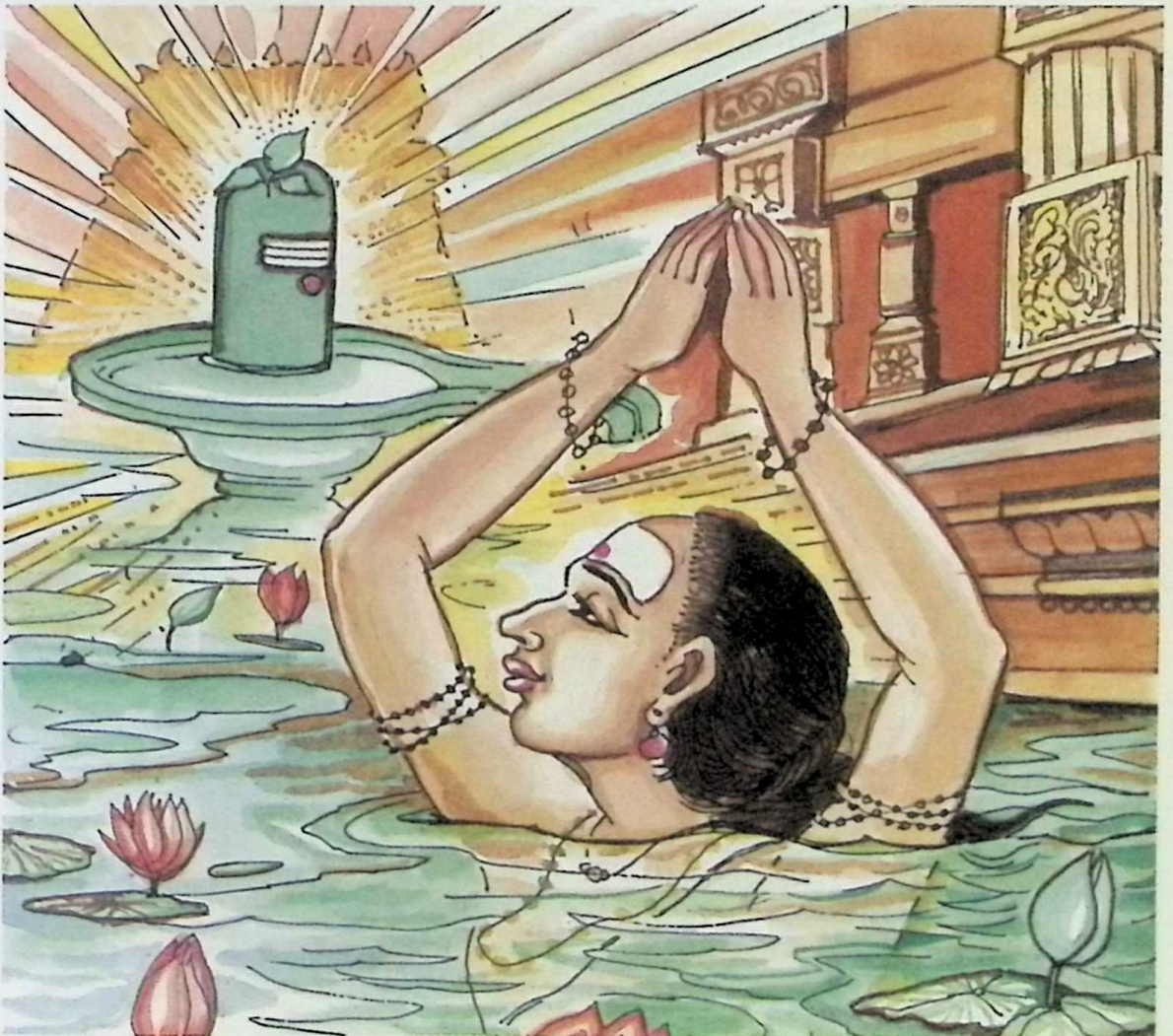
During the marriage of Sambandar at Nallur, a divine light shone, and the whole area was suffused in its brilliance. Sambandar disappeared into that light and Muruganar, too, entered the effulgent flame, chanting the name of the Lord, and gaining salvation.

Muruga Nayanar attained eternal bliss at the feet of Siva along with his beloved Gnanasambandar. This incident reveals Muruganar's great reverence for Sambandar, a devotee of Lord Siva.

RUDRA PASUPATI NAYANAR

The Rudram is a powerful Vedic hymn. It hails Siva as the Supreme Lord and accords its grace to those who chant it. This story illustrates the great spiritual power of the Rudram hymn.

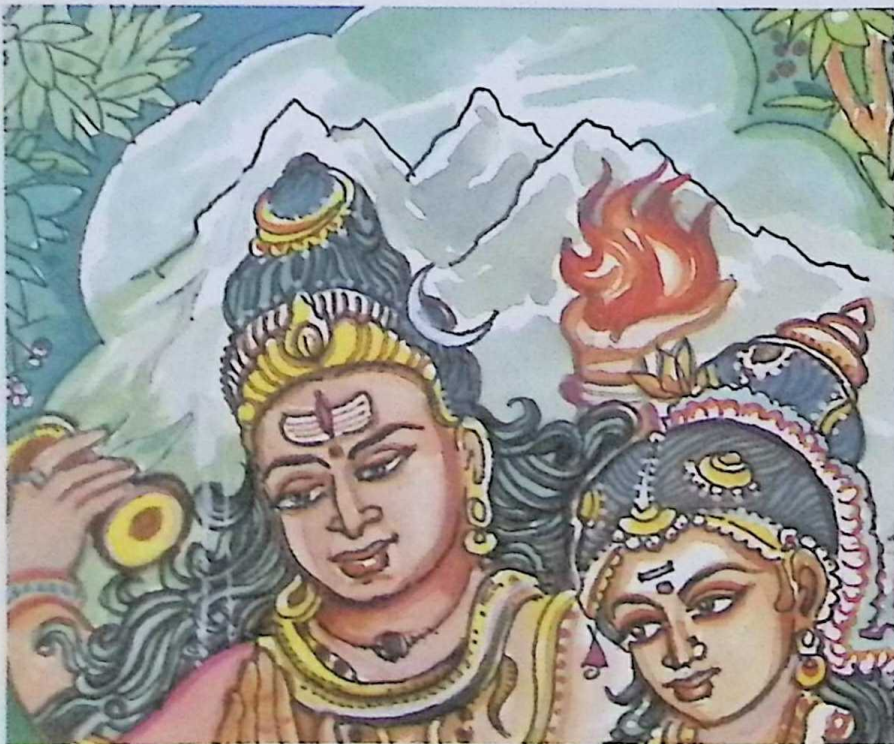
The village of Tiru Talaiyur was situated in the land made bountiful by the mighty River Cauvery. The fragrant groves and green fields made the land truly blessed, and its citizens a happy and contented people.



Pasupati, an ardent devotee of the Lord, was a great Vedic scholar who lived in the village. Pasupati delighted so much in chanting the Rudram hymn that it became almost like his very breath.

The scholar often stood in the waters of the lotus lake in Tiru Talaiyur. Submerged upto his neck, Pasupati would hold his hands up in adoration of the Lord, and chant the powerful Rudram. He would then dress in dry clothes and proceed to the temple to pay obeisance to the Lord.

Thus were Pasupati's days passed, spent in fervent prayer and meditation. The Lord, impressed by his great devotion, blessed Pasupati. The scholar attained Moksha (salvation) by chanting the Rudram hymn. Ever after, Pasupati was known as Rudra Pasupati Nayanar by the people.





Koviloor Digital Library

STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA

The *Periyapuranam*, delineating the lives of the 63 famous Saivite saints of Tamil Nadu, known popularly as the "Arupathumoonru Nayanmar," was written by Sekkizhar, a wise chief minister of the Chola kingdom. Since then, these stories have been narrated by countless generations of scholars in the temples of Tamil Nadu, and retold in both Tamil and English.

The devotion of these saints to Lord Siva was all encompassing. They were prepared to sacrifice not only their material wealth but even their lives and those of their families in the service of the Lord and His devotees. The numerous verses composed by the 63 saints in praise of Lord Siva in the various temples of Tamil Nadu have stood the test of time. The life histories of these saints serve as a role model to young people, and speak of the importance of devotion to duty and commitment to society.

The present stories have been retold in simple English for the benefit of young readers in India and abroad by Kalpana Ramani, Asha Kannan and Bhama Chandran, and edited by Lakshmi Venkataraman. Every story is brought to life in the evocative illustrations of Subha. This book is the second in a series of eight volumes envisaged by the Koviloor Adhinam Children's Book Trust.

© KALAKSHETRA PRESS
84 Kalakshetra Road
Thiruvannamiyur
Chennai 600041
Phone/Fax: 4911390
e-mail: koviloor@hotmail.com

Koviloor Adhinam Vedanta Centre Inc.
2 Sparrow Drive
Princeton Junction
New Jersey, USA
Phone: (609) 443-8797
e-mail: koviloorusa@yahoo.com